

Agenda Item: III.

DATE: April 15, 2004

SUBJECT: WICHE Grant and Master Plan Update

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Tennessee has recently been selected to participate in *Changing Directions*, a national project funded by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and the Lumina Foundation. This project examines how states can structure financial aid and financing policies and practices to maximize participation, access, and success for all students. Designed around an integrated approach to restructuring appropriations, tuition, and financial aid policies and practices, the overarching goal of the *Changing Directions* project is better, more informed decision-making on issues related to financial aid and financing in higher education. Changing Direction provides a venue for policymakers and educators from all regions of the country to critically examine strengths and weaknesses of public policies and develop new models by looking at emerging trends, their potential impact on higher education, and the policy implications related to issues of financial aid, finance, cost of education, and access.

One of the central objectives of Tennessee's participation in the *Changing Directions* initiative is to couple master planning and finance policy into an integrated and coherent framework that works to promote the goals of a public agenda for higher education. Concurrently, Tennessee aims to create a broader understanding of the need to fund need-based aid during an era of rising tuition costs. The goal of this integrated planning initiative is to develop a public agenda that examines how higher education can serve the needs of the state, rather than the traditional focus of such initiatives on institution building.

Additional information regarding Tennessee's participation in this project will be distributed at the Commission meeting.